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ABSTRACT

This paper questions whether it is appropriate to evaluate music educators exclusively on general competencies, or whether effective music teaching involves certain teaching behaviors, characteristics, and attributes that are so significantly unique that they demand their own set of evaluative criteria. The paper reviews selected relevant research from 1989 to 1993 and discusses pertinent practical issues involved in the evaluation of public school music teachers, and synthesizes eight general areas for further development as potential criteria for music teacher evaluation. Both empirical and nonempirical evidences are studied, and attempts are made to reconcile the discontinuity that exists between evaluative criteria appropriate for all teachers and that which is appropriate for teachers of music. An appropriate evaluation instrument for in-service music teachers should include the following broad areas that would serve as defining attributes: (1) personal characteristics, as evidenced through student teacher, teacher faculty, and teacher administration interactions; (2) musical competence and performance skill, as evidenced when teaching a lesson; (3) effective use of nonverbal strategies, such as modeling and demonstrating; (4) effective use of verbal strategies, such as eliciting performance from students; (5) classroom management, including discipline, group participation, and the creation of a positive learning environment; (6) effective planning for concept learning and aesthetic appreciation across a wide age span; (7) an objective assessment of teaching style based on empirically supported criteria; and (8) relevant and appropriate professional development activities. Contains 10 references. (DK)

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Evaluation of Music Educators:
Toward Defining An Appropriate Instrument

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Evaluation of Music Educators:
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The Problem

Throughout America, teacher evaluation is becoming a common, and in many states, a mandated procedure. State mandated evaluations are designed to check for general teaching competencies that are assumed to be applicable to all teachers across all disciplines. Such procedures usually involve an observer who visits the classroom of the teacher being evaluated (sometimes this is announced, sometimes not), who follows a prescribed procedure that has been board or state-approved. The evaluation process generally includes, but is not limited to, the completion and signing of forms of various kinds, pre- and post-evaluation interviews, and a rating of the teacher's competency based on a pre-determined scale.

When state legislatures are determining generic criteria for teacher competencies, there seems to exist an underlying assumption that all subjects are taught in the same manner. The question can be raised: Is it appropriate to evaluate music educators exclusively on general competencies, or does effective music teaching involve certain teaching behaviors, characteristics, and attributes that are so significantly unique that they demand their own set of evaluative criteria? Taebel (1990b) comments:

> "many teachers are concerned about the applicability of generic competencies to music teaching; others question the qualifications of an observer or evaluator who is not trained in music." (p. 50)

Taebel (1990a) also states that:

> "Although we have many recommendations from general education [regarding teacher evaluation criteria], there is no known research on the evaluation of music teaching." (p. 21)

The two-fold purpose of this paper is to examine: 1) selected current literature (1989-1993) and the state of research into the areas related to teacher evaluation, and 2) the practical issues involved in the evaluation of public school music educators. From this overview it is hoped that some appropriate dimensions for defining an evaluation instrument shall emerge. We shall canvass both empirical and non-empirical evidence, and attempt to reconcile the aforementioned discontinuity that exists between evaluative criteria appropriate for "all teachers" and that which is appropriate for teachers of music.

Overview of Related Research

Teacher effectiveness research has attempted to define in a general sense "the successful teacher." Grant & Drafall (1991) relay that much of this has been done through attempting "to establish empirically the relationship between teacher behavior and student achievement...[through what is known as] *process-product* research." Research conducted within the process-product paradigm analyzes student outcomes and seeks to find causal links between student learning and a teacher's methods, style, and/or personal characteristics. The authors further reveal that:

> "Music education has not kept pace in efforts to provide a research-based model of effective teaching." (p. 34)

There have been a number of descriptive studies within the domain of music education that provide information as to the characteristics of what a "successful" or "effective" music teacher is or does. A review of these descriptive studies by Grant & Drafall (1991) concludes that an effective music teacher:

- is adept at human relationships,
- is an independent thinker,
- possesses a strong need to accomplish tasks,
- has a creative teaching style,

· is able to adapt instruction to student needs,

· maintains an appropriate rehearsal atmosphere,

· balances rehearsal and teacher talk effectively,

· is thoroughly prepared for class, and

· uses high quality literature. (pp. 38-39)

While few will argue that these are accurate *descriptions* of a successful music teacher, the primary difficulty with these descriptive statements lies in the fact that they do not indicate the effects of these characteristics on students and student-learning. Grant & Drafall (1991) also review the relevant process-product studies in music education from 1980-1989, and extract the following competencies which seem to best discriminate between effective and less-effective music teachers:

·the teacher uses a variety of methods,

· the teacher relates objectives to student interests and needs,

· the teacher structures student behavior,

· the teacher monitors time on-task of students, and

· the teacher uses pupil ideas. (p. 43)

These competencies, when present in a music teacher, have been shown to positively change student attitude, attentiveness, achievement, or performance. The authors conclude that two limitations have prevented this type of research in music education from being widely conducted and accepted. These are: 1) the belief by many music educators that the most important results of music education are affective and therefore cannot be measured, and 2) the profession's fundamental lack of agreement on what should be taught. A call for more research into this area is sounded, particularly those couched within the process-product paradigm, whose results can be more easily understood and incorporated into the practices of in-service teachers.

Taebel (1990a) reports a study of the classroom evaluations of over 500 music teachers in the state of Alabama, the primary purpose of which was to describe the

classroom performance of music teachers in comparison with other teachers. The evaluative criteria used were established by the state legislature in the passing of the Alabama Career Incentive Program in 1985. The law provided for an incentive-based, merit pay plan for teachers, based on their classroom performance and other professional activities. The study based its comparison on the following ten competencies:

1. Presents organized instruction
2. Uses materials and equipment
3. Provides for practice and application
4. Monitors students achievement
5. Uses monitoring data
6. Manages classroom time
7. Maintains student behavior
8. Knows subject matter
9. Maintains a positive atmosphere
10. Communicates clearly and efficiently (p. 13)

The results of the comparison reveal that the music teachers scored below the mean on 7 of the 10 competencies. An examination of the individual items contributing to these lower scores showed that the music teachers were similarly rated on a majority of these items, with dramatic differences in the questioning area, especially when the questions called for a performance response. Music teachers outperformed other teachers in using materials and eliciting performance from students, yet scored lower in the use of various types of questions. It is suggested that an evaluation system that depends heavily

> "...on verbal exchanges and cognitive learning may be inappropriate for music teachers. If systems use generic competencies, they should be defined so that verbal as well as nonverbal behaviors by the teacher and/or students are included." (p. 20)

Schmidt (1992) has examined the reliability of untrained observers' evaluations of applied music instruction. The evaluation instrument used was the Applied Teaching Rating Scale (ATRS). In any evaluation setting, a salient issue is the amount of training the evaluator has obtained in the use of the evaluation instrument. The results suggest that with the ATRS, certain applied teaching behaviors can be reliably evaluated by observers untrained in its usage. These are:

- the teacher shows a genuine interest in the student,
- the teacher demonstrates patience and understanding,
- suitability of music selection to student ability,
- clarity of verbal explanations,
- ability to break down a task, and
- accurate perception of student ability. (p. 26)

The findings also pointed out that certain evaluative criteria were rated unreliably; that is, there was a wide range of difference between the ratings submitted by trained and untrained evaluators. The evidence revealed that rater characteristics were the primary cause of this unreliablity; these rater characteristics included (but were not limited to) the amount of the observers' training in the use of the ATRS and familiarity with the instructor. The author suggests that these areas need to be researched thoroughly, as they were a significant source of variance in ratings. While this study focused on applied teaching evaluations and did not employ non-musicians as subjects (as many principals, the primary evaluators of public school music teachers, tend to be), the results provide the prospect of further research to determine any possible correlation to evaluation of classroom teaching. It also empirically establishes the importance of observer training in the use of the evaluation instrument.

A recent investigation by Gumm (1993) provides potentially useful information with regard to evaluative criteria. An attempt was made first to develop a model of choral music teaching style and subsequently develop a means of assessing the

teaching style of secondary choral music teachers. 475 choral music teachers responded to a nationally distributed questionnaire (2,000 were mailed), and these responses were the basis for the identification of eight statistically validated dimensions of choral music teaching style. These are:

1. *Student Independence*, having to do with student feelings about music, opinions, imaginative ideas, and creativity, combined with the use of discussion by the teacher. This dimension is construed as an indication of the teacher's focus on developing independence in students.
2. *Teacher Authority*, representing the attempt to maintain and assert control over student behavior to conform to the teacher's agenda.
3. *Positive Learning Environment*, which is achieved by through setting a positive mood, allowing time to ensure clarity, and offering positive feedback on student learning.
4. *Time Efficiency*, which represents the teacher's emphasis on accomplishing a number of goals and requiring quick responses from the students.
5. *Nonverbal Motivation*, which consists of nonverbal behaviors used to heighten student attention and energy level, such as facial expression, body stance, eye contact, etc.
6. *Aesthetic Music Performance*, which has to do with the development of singing and aural skills that emphasize aesthetic, artistic, or expressive performance of music.
7. *Group Dynamics* concerns itself with individual and small-group interactions that promote the transference of the leadership role in the classroom to students.

8. *Music Concept Learning*, denoting an emphasis conceptual learning in the classroom, and the subsequent use of this knowledge in musical problem solving in the classroom.(p. 195)

As far as developing an assessment instrument, the author reports that this was "less than satisfactorily met," and it is suggested that "..the individual items could be improved to...better reflect the dimensions revealed" (p. 196). The results indicate that choral music teaching style, based on self-reported ratings, appears to be stable within the choral music setting.

Teacher demonstration and modeling in music teaching and learning is the subject of an extensive review by Dickey (1992). In a synthesis of relevant research in this area unique to music education, several valuable conclusions concerning the importance of modeling and demonstration in music teaching are empirically supported. They are:

- teacher demonstration-student imitation cycles can contribute significantly to the development of musical skills,
- students learn to make increasingly complex musical discriminations through modeling, via both musically appropriate and inappropriate demonstrations and imitations,
- modeling is an effective strategy throughout a wide age distribution,
- the use of a prepared tape as a model appears to be an effective teaching strategy for both elementary students and college students,
- modeling is a more effective strategy than verbal description for teaching musical performance,
- teachers who possess the skills to model spend more time modeling than teachers who do not, and

- in order to be effective, musical models (both appropriate and inappropriate, or correct and incorrect) must be accurate models. (pp. 36-37)

The author concludes that music discriminations are *not* taught effectively through strictly verbal descriptions. While not advocating the complete abandonment of verbal strategies in music teaching, it is suggested that modeling strategies should play a more prominent role than they currently do in school music classes.

This review of research demonstrates the broad scope and variety of behaviors considered important for effective music teaching and reveals several recurring elements that are possible evaluation bases for music educators. Nonverbal communication and modeling/demonstration appears to be important to music teaching (Taebel, 1990a; Dickey, 1992; Gumm, 1993), and is particularly relevant relative to questioning techniques used within the context of music teaching. Teaching style (Grant & Drafall, 1991; Dickey, 1992; Gumm, 1993) recurs as a salient issue with evaluative possibility. Personal characteristics (Grant & Drafall, 1991; Gumm, 1993; Schmidt, 1992) seem to play a vital role in determining teaching success in the music classroom. Differences revealed among the evaluations of applied music instruction (Schmidt, 1992), classroom performance (Taebel, 1990a), and the dimensions of choral music teaching style (Gumm, 1993) also lend insight to the complexity of music teacher evaluation in general.

Evaluation in Practice: Issues and Questions

There are a number of issues of a non-empirical nature that are relevant to the present discussion. These issues can be posed as questions: 1) just what makes a master teacher, that is, one who would be highly rated on an evaluation? 2) is evaluation fair to music educators? 3) how are music teachers being evaluated in the absence of a domain-specific evaluation instrument? and 4) has MENC provided any guidance or suggestions in this area?

Brand (1990) presents a description of a "master music teacher." He posits the ingredients for such an individual to be:

- a "sixth sense" for understanding his or her students,
- pride in his or her work,
- a fertile imagination,
- a theatrical flair,
- instructional urgency--a drive to accomplish the highest musical goals, and
- the drive to work hard, and obtain enormous satisfaction. (p. 24)

While no one would question that these are worthwhile characteristics, these are nearly impossible to use as evaluative criteria. It is, for example, impractical (if not impossible) to attempt to assess one's "sixth sense" or "theatrical flair." The author goes on to state that:

> "Being a master music teacher means selecting goals of high worth, finding creative ways to achieve those goals, and using extraordinary music teaching and rehearsing skills in the pursuit of musical excellence." (p. 25)

It can be reasonably argued that Brand (1990) is actually describing the personal attributes of *any* successful teacher, not just a music teacher. Clearly he is bringing considerable practical knowledge and experience to bear in the presentation of such statements. Even in the absence of empirical evidence in these assertions, one finds some parallels in the research discussed in the previous section; e.g. nonverbal communication and personal characteristics (in the form of "theatrical flair" and having a "sixth sense"), and teaching style (again, "theatrical flair," along with "instructional urgency," and "the drive to work hard.")

Taebel (1990b) makes the case that evaluation of music teachers without consideration of the uniqueness of the subject is not fair. He remarks that "...it is important that music teachers be fairly evaluated in a way that is sensitive to the unique features of music teaching and learning" (p. 31). He argues rather convincingly that the common

perspective on teaching--the explicit instruction model--relies on criteria that are improper for music teaching. One of the primary tenets of this model places questioning as the most important teaching behavior. The primary difficulty with this aspect of the model is that common music teaching behaviors, such as a request for a student to play a phrase, would *not* be classified as a question for evaluation purposes. Another aspect of many evaluation systems that is underrepresented for music teachers is modeling/demonstrating. The author suggests the following improvements in current evaluation systems in order to make them more fair to music teachers:

- the classroom observation instrument should be as objective as possible,
- the manual for observers should include examples of music teaching,
- observer training should include discussion and observation of music classes, and consideration for the problems inherent in using the observation tool in a music performance class,
- the observation instrument should list behaviors that are important in evaluating a music teacher's classroom performance, such as modeling/demonstration, accuracy of error detection and appropriateness of the feedback,
- music performance responses should be coded separately from behavioral or verbal responses,
- if music teacher's scores are considerably different from the norm, then separate norms should be adopted to allow music teachers to be compared only with each other, and
- professional development activities specific to the teacher's needs should arise from the evaluation. (pp. 53-54)

Merrion and Larsen (1986) present a practical set of evaluative criteria for music teachers based on their experience as principals. They base their suggestions on the belief that :

> "...there is one central objective in elementary music education: to increase children's appreciation of music. Principals need not be trained musicians to identify evidence that this objective is being met. A program's success manifests itself in the enjoyment and understanding of music among children." (p. 30)

These authors provide a list of "observable and measurable ways to assess elementary music teaching" (p.30). The following characteristics comprise the list:

- provides a variety of activities,
- utilizes a variety of musical media within the class period,
- maintains a high level of participation,
- facilitates learning within different instructional modes (e.g., whole group participation, small group interaction, and individual performance),
- implements differing instructional formats (e.g., demonstrations, singing, discovery sessions, etc.),
- creates opportunities for all children to perform,
- fosters development within all learning domains (e.g., cognitive, pyschomotor, aesthetic),
- structures lessons to learner characteristics,
- sequences activities to promote student success,
- uses diverse instructional materials, and
- demonstrates vocal and instrumental skills. (pp. 30-31)

They suggest that these characteristics can be assessed using three basic tools--astute observation techniques, interview techniques which gather evaluations of the music

program from students and classroom teachers, and in-depth conferencing with the music teacher to determine the design and direction of the music program. Interpersonal communication skills, skill in long-range planning for a wide span of student ages, and professional development are noted as particularly strong areas of concern for the music teacher.

MENC has indirectly provided a set of criteria that is potentially helpful in the evaluation of music education professionals. In its former Professional Certification program (it was dissolved effective January 31, 1994) the application process to obtain "Nationally Registered Music Educator" status involved obtaining five professional recommendations. The recommendation form provided as part of the application packet presented a set of evaluative statements for the prospective recommender to use in rating the applicant. Although clearly a subjectively oriented recommendation, the statements chosen for this form supply a valuable perspective on MENC's position with respect to what behaviors, characteristics, and attributes are considered important in music education professionals on a national level. The following is the list and the rater's instructions for evaluating the criteria:

> *Instructions: Relative to other music teachers you have known or worked with, how does this teacher compare with respect to each of the following characteristics? (Emphasis should be on teacher effectiveness in the classroom and the ability to create an environment conducive to student learning, not on personal traits.)*
>
> - is knowledgeable about music education and his or her field of specialization,
> - demonstrates a high level of musicianship,
> - plans learning experiences to achieve clearly defined musical goals,
> - accurately diagnoses student learning problems and needs,

- communicates effectively with students,
- motivates students to achieve the highest possible level,
- uses appropriate and effective teaching materials,
- develops a supportive and stimulating environment characterized by a high level of student learning,
- excites students and interests them in music,
- emphasizes developing skills and knowledge to enable students to continue their music learning independently,
- pursues a systematic and effective personal program of professional growth and development,
- recognizes his or her weaknesses as a teacher and takes specific steps to remedy them,
- serves as a role model for students by exemplifying the musical and personal traits that the school seeks to develop, and
- contributes to the musical life of his or her community. (MENC,1993)

From this overview of practical knowledge and experience emerges several common elements of potential value in the defining of an appropriate music teaching evaluation instrument. Personal characteristics again surface as a possible evaluation criterion ((Brand, 1990; Taebel, 1990b; MENC, 1993). Unique behaviors in music teaching, such as modeling/demonstrating, the reduced importance of questioning in music lessons, and the participatory nature of music are found to be valuable enough to warrant inclusion as evaluation bases (Merrion & Larsen 1986; Taebel, 1990b; MENC, 1993). The value of interpersonal and communication skills and effective planning is emphasized (Merrion &Larsen, 1986; Brand, 1990; MENC, 1993). The ability to recognize one's own weaknesses and to pursue pertinent professional development activities is considered an important aspect of evaluation (Merrion & Larsen, 1986; Taebel, 1990b; MENC, 1993). It

is also mentioned that music teachers need to demonstrate musical skills (Merrion & Larsen, 1986, Brand, 1990; MENC, 1993).

Discussion

Analysis of the material presented in this paper reveals a noticeable gap between research-based studies and practical knowledge in teacher evaluation. While research seems to target areas relating to music teacher evaluation criteria, it has not yet tackled the actual problem of evaluation itself. Several reasons may account for this. One might be that evaluation is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to break down into researchable components. Another reason may be a lack of interest in the subject; this, however, will no doubt change as more and more states mandate teacher evaluation. A third reason may be that a majority of the present evaluation studies appear to be completed by doctoral candidates. Because these types of studies require a considerable amount of work and time, they prove a daunting exercise for doctoral students who are interested in a more easily and quickly researched dissertation subject.

Regarding the gap between researched areas and practical knowledge, it appears that persons with this practical knowledge need to be actively involved in research pertaining to the evaluation process. Most in-service music teachers would agree that the two principals whose evaluation practices were discussed earlier (Merrion & Larsen, 1986) have a good understanding of the uniqueness of music teaching and how it can be effectively evaluated. Common sense seems to indicate that individuals such as these should be consulted and encouraged to participate in music teacher evaluation research to help the research focus remain realistic. Bresler (1993) approaches the subject of bringing teacher knowledge into the research domain:

> "The usefulness of teacher research is dual. For the scholarly community, the significance lies in the questions and answers teachers provide to the profession invigorating the field and

> enhancing its use and applicability. Another benefit...stems from the fact that the act of systematic reflection enhances one's teaching, bringing new insights and helping to facilitate a more critical stance." (p. 16)

One can speculate that teacher and administrative involvement in evaluation research would help serve to bridge the gap between what is empirically known and what is practically known in music teacher evaluation. It is now the responsibility of active researchers to appropriately address this issue.

Taebel (1990b) recommends a similar approach to closing the distance between practice and research in evaluation. He suggests that music teachers work together with district evaluators to adjust the evaluation program to better suit music teaching, and that state music education associations can play an active role in creating domain-appropriate criteria.

Solutions to the evaluation dilemma are as complex as the issue itself. The problem pointed out by Grant and Drafall (1991) regarding the profession's "lack of fundamental agreement on what should be taught"(p. 44) is a prime example of this complexity. It is hardly possible to create an evaluation instrument sensitive to the unique features of music teaching unless that instrument is based upon and guided by a clear set of educational objectives and goals. The present effort by MENC to create a set of national standards for music education is an important first step in this direction. Once the united music education profession agrees on exactly what should be taught in music programs, it logically follows that the development of an assessment instrument for music teachers can be more effectively constructed.

MENC provides a framework in which to begin working toward an appropriate evaluation instrument in the form of the rating criteria in the recommendation form previously used in its former Professional Certification Program. The rating criteria appear to take into consideration the uniqueness of music as a curricular subject and the

subsequent special qualities and behaviors an effective music educator must exhibit (e.g., being a musical role model and demonstrating a high level of musicianship). However, the present discussion indicates that music educators spend a great deal of time eliciting performance from their students, and while this is not specifically addressed in the recommendation form, it could conceivably influence the rater's marking on the item pertaining to the evaluation of student learning.

It appears, then, that an appropriate evaluation instrument for in-service music teachers should include the following broad areas which would serve as defining attributes:

- personal characteristics, as evidenced through student-teacher, teacher faculty, and teacher-administration interactions;
- musical competence and performance skill, as evidenced when teaching a lesson;
- effective use of nonverbal strategies, such as modeling/demonstrating;
- effective use of verbal strategies, such as eliciting performance from students;
- classroom management, including discipline, group participation, and the creation of a positive learning environment;
- effective planning for concept learning *and* aesthetic appreciation across a wide age span,
- an objective assessment of teaching style based on empirically supported criteria, and
- relevant and appropriate professional development activities should be recommended.

These broad areas emerge from the synthesis of material covered in the present discussion. As research continues these areas will no doubt be expanded to include other relevant

facets of music teaching. Research will also illuminate the appropriate manner in which these broad areas should be subdivided into ratable components.

The purposes of this paper were to review selected current research, discuss issues, and suggest appropriate dimensions with respect to the evaluation of in-service music education professionals. While the actual creation of an evaluation instrument is beyond the scope of the present discussion, we can see from this overview that there exists enough research-supported evidence and practical knowledge to initiate this essential task. Many questions remain. A few are: How does one assess teaching style in music education? What training is necessary for an observer to have in order to accurately evaluate a music teacher? How does one objectively evaluate the personal characteristics that research continues to reveal as essential for good music teaching? What observation techniques are best for evaluating music instruction? How reliable are various evaluation instruments when used in rating the same music teacher? The evaluation of music teachers remains an area in need of relevant research, and the development of an appropriate evaluation and observation instrument must be urgently addressed. It is now the responsibility of the united music teaching profession, in tandem with active music education researchers, to meet this challenge.

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Evaluation of Music Educators:
Toward Defining An Appropriate Instrument

Abstract

Evaluation of in-service music teachers is growing more common in America as state legislatures increasingly mandate evaluations of teaching competency. State mandated evaluations rely on the validity of generic competencies assumed to be applicable to all areas of teaching. It appears, though, that successful music teaching employs certain unique behaviors, personal characteristics, and teaching styles that warrant special consideration in the development of an observation and assessment instrument. Five current research studies (1990-1993) and four recent documentations of practical knowledge and experience in music teacher evaluation were reviewed. From this overview, eight defining areas emerge as empirically and practically relevant to the creation of a domain-appropriate evaluation instrument:

- personal characteristics, as evidenced through student-teacher, teacher-faculty, and teacher-administration interactions;
- musical competence and performance skill, as evidenced when teaching a lesson;
- effective use of nonverbal strategies, such as modeling/demonstrating;
- effective use of verbal strategies, such as eliciting performance from students;
- classroom management, including discipline, group participation, and the creation of a positive learning environment;
- effective planning for concept learning *and* aesthetic appreciation across a wide age span;
- an objective assessment of teaching style based on empirically supported criteria, and
- appropriate professional development activities should be recommended.

As research continues it is predicted that these areas will be expanded to include other relevant facets of music teaching. Observer training in the use of the evaluation instrument is also a salient issue. Further research is also needed to determine exactly how these areas can be subdivided into ratable components. To date, there has been no specific research with respect to music teacher evaluation. Perhaps the agreement among music education professionals on a set of nationally accepted instructional standards, such as those put forth by MENC (September, 1993), combined with empirically supported evaluation criteria, will facilitate the development of an appropriate evaluation instrument for music education.